



CHANGING CROPPING LANDSCAPE OF THE PUNJAB STORY OF GRAPES CULTIVATION



In Pakistan, grapes are mostly grown in mountainous and sub-mountainous areas of the Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. Grapes are cultivated on an area of nearly 39,000 acres (15,300 hectares) with annual productivity of about 64,320 tonnes. Punjab province, with a plain topography, not known for fruit cultivation such as Grapes but there is huge demand for eating this delicious fruit by the Punjabi people.

During last few years, innovative farming methods like high efficiency irrigation systems has made it possible to grow different types of fruits like Grapes, Olive, Papaya etc. in plain areas of the Punjab like Toba Tek Singh, Nankana Sahib, Mandi Bahauddin, Layyah and Bhakkar districts. Under the World Bank funded Punjab Irrigated-Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project (PIPIP), installation of drip irrigation systems have been started by the On Farm Water Management (OFWM) wing of Punjab Agriculture Department in 2012.

Mr. Aslam, a progressive farmer of district Toba Tek Singh, is one of those pioneering farmers who said goodbye to the traditional farming due to shortage of canal water, highly brackish groundwater & less profit on traditional crops and opted drip irrigation to grow high value crops. He got installed drip irrigation system on five (5) acres for cultivation of citrus in 2014 and after getting tangible results extended it on another five (5) acres for growing Grapes.

While sharing his experience he shared that *“I used to grow Wheat, Cotton and Maize before installation of drip irrigation. It took three hours to irrigate one acre of land. Now, I irrigate five (5) acres Grapes just in one hour time. First harvest of Grapes earned me PKR 400,000 per acre. It was impossible to get such huge profit with ordinary crops grown with flood irrigation”*.

Regarding fertilizer application, Mr. Aslam indicated that *“one of the biggest advantage of drip irrigation is application of soluble fertilizers to plants through fertigation tanks & venturi results in higher yields, better quality produce, reduced leaching & runoff, less volatility and better return on fertilizer investment”*.

“I grow all popular Grapes varieties including NARC Black, Sultania-C, Kings Rubi, Flame Seedless, Vetro Black, Cardinal, Sugra-1 and Early White. Among all these varieties, Sultania-C is fetching better prices in the local market due to its unique taste and color. Grapes cultivated with drip irrigation gave healthy and vigorous crop stand, more fruit on strong & resilient branches leading to higher yield per plant”.

Mr. Ghulam Shabir, Deputy Director Agriculture (OFWM), T.T. Singh while giving his views indicated that drip irrigation technology is getting more popular day by day amongst the farming community of Toba Tek Singh because it is enabling farmers to shift from traditional to high value agriculture and they can grow crops with less inputs vis high returns under the water shortage and climate change scenario.

Mr. Aslam recommending his fellow farmers to adopt drip irrigation technology for growing high value crops (grapes, citrus and vegetables) to improve their socio-economic conditions.



INCOME
PKR 400,000 per acre



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